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Shultz Justifies Scaring Qaddafi By Use of Press

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Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Oct. 2 — Secretary of State George P. Shultz said today that Washington was free to take whatever actions might cause trouble for Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi because the United States was "pretty darn close" to a state of war with Libya.

In a news conference, Mr. Shultz refused to comment on a report that the Reagan Administration had engaged in a campaign of deception against Colonel Qaddafi in August.

But he seemed to confirm the report by his answers, in which he praised the use of deception if it would cause problems for the Libyan leader.

Although Mr. Shultz did not explicitly confirm or deny the existence of a "disinformation" campaign, the tone of his remarks conflicted with statements by White House officials, who said the Government had not planted any false reports in American newspapers.

Mr. Shultz said the United States was able to carry out any deception because of what he described as a tendency in the American press to exaggerate the importance of naval movements off Libya.

"Frankly, I don't have any problems with a little psychological warfare against Qaddafi," Mr. Shultz said.

"We do have various things going on that are difficult for him to know exactly what they mean, that perhaps keep him off balance," he said.

Mr. Shultz said there were signs that Libya was responsible for the hijacking of a Pan American World Airways plane in Karachi, Pakistan, last month.

In discussing relations with Libya, Mr. Shultz compared the situation to World War II and quoted Winston Churchill as having said, "In time of war, the truth is so precious, it must be attended by a bodyguard of lies."

The quotation became the title of a book, "Bodyguard of Lies," by Anthony Cave-Brown, about the use of deception in World War II.

When a reporter remarked that Mr. Shultz's remarks seemed, in effect, a declaration of war, the Secretary said, "I think that insofar as Qaddafi is concerned, we don't have a declaration of war; but we have something pretty darn close to it."

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"I know of no decision to have people go out and tell lies," he said. "I think, however, if there are ways to make Qaddafi nervous, why shouldn't we?"

Mr. Shultz, who has taken the lead within the Government in urging the use of force against Libya, seemed to take the offensive during the news conference.

I Calls Qaddafi a 'Menace'

Speaking of Colonel Qaddafi, Mr. Shultz said:

"Insofar as he is concerned, we think he is a menace. And we want to see the activities of Libya stop. So exactly what we are, and intend to do about it, I don't think it is appropriate for me to say. But we have shown that we are willing to take direct action. We have shown that we have applied a very broad range of sanctions to his activities."

As an example, Mr. Shultz said, the Government has learned that the press often focuses on secret ship movements, and has therefore decided to use this tendency to cause Colonel Qaddafi to fear he may be invaded.

"It is very easy," Mr. Shultz said. "You people in the news business enjoy not allowing the U.S. to do anything in secret if you can help it.

"So, if the fleet moves from one place to another, you are determined to report it even though we might want to have it operate secretly. It is very difficult for that to happen. So we can absolutely bank on the fact that if the fleet does something or other, you will scream. Qaddafi will hear it, and the fleet may, or may not, be getting ready to do something."

In August, one of the concerns of Colonel Qaddafi were naval maneuvers by the United States with Egypt off Libya.

The Washington Post quoted Mr. Shultz as having said in jest at one point that he hoped Colonel Qaddafi might get AIDS.

He declined to confirm this, saying, "I have no comment on statements that somebody who probably was not there may incorrectly attribute to somebody who was there."

At one point, a journalist said that the report of a decision to disinform was "a very serious charge."

"Why is that a charge?" Mr. Shultz replied. "If I were a private citizen reading about it, and I read that my Government was trying to confuse somebody who was conducting terrorist acts and murdering Americans, I would say, 'Gee, I hope it is true.' I don't see why you think this is a charge."

He said that although he knew of "no decision to have people go out and tell lies," he had nothing against taking steps to make Colonel Qaddafi "nervous."

"If there are ways in which we can make Qaddafi nervous, why shouldn't we?" he said. "And I described one of them. That is not deceiving you, but just using your predictable tendencies to report things that we try to keep secret."

"So we label it a big secret and you will find out about it and you will report it. You know that. The higher the classification, the quicker you will report it. So you are predictable in that sense."